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The Misereres in Gloucester Cathedral

by O. W. Clark
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THE MISERERES IN GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL.

(A LECTURE.)

By OSCAR W. CLARK, M.A., M.B.

As you are all aware, in recent years there has been a great alteration in the received view as to what constitutes history. We are gradually discovering that it is not only the great battles, or the events in the lives of kings, which are worthy of being narrated by historians, but an effort is being gradually made to try to understand the life, the customs, the beliefs, the amusements, and the cares of the people; for if these are understood, not only can we regard history more sympathetically, but we are much more able to understand the conditions which produced the battles and revolutions which our forefathers alone thought worthy of narration.

So now a personal record of any kind is eagerly seized on. We now rejoice that the Paston family did not destroy their papers, and that Ralph Verney was so painfully methodical and careful in keeping all his letters. The illuminations of such books as the Luttrell Psalter or of illuminated copies of Froissart are carefully studied and reproduced, and help to bring us to the absolute daily life of our forefathers—their toils, their luxuries, their simple weeds or gorgeous robes and head-dresses. In England we are singularly fortunate in our literature. In the pages of Chaucer we possess an absolutely inimitable picture of every grade of society, told in such a masterly way that all the characters pass before us as though in real life. Here the temptation to transgress my limits is almost unconquerable,

for as most of you know this great poet is one of my very dearest friends. Besides Chaucer we have Langland's *Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman*, which in a way is even more instructive. Chaucer describes all his characters from without, if one may so say, without in any way denying his glorious human sympathy with his characters, while the author of the *Vision* speaks of *himself*—sees life from within. In the *Vision* we have numberless details not only of methods of life and work, but what is almost of greater importance—of the beliefs held by the earnest, sober, deep-thinking men of the people, strong in their faith in the Church and in Christ, yet stirred to wrath and almost hopeless melancholy at the endless abuses both among the people themselves and in Church and State. There is one other book which I cannot pass over in silence, namely *Piers the Plowman's Crede*, which gives one of the most vivid pictures we have of the glories of such a monastic church as that of the Benedictine convent of Gloucester. I have stated that attention has been drawn to the pictures of daily life in the illuminated books; studies too have been made of the wonderful carvings which remain in our churches, and more particularly in the west fronts which are the glories of the cathedrals in France.

Here in Gloucester we are fortunate in possessing no small number of these carvings in the misereres of the beautiful stalls, which stalls of course are familiar to you all, but which the photographs on the screen will recall to your memories. Of the stalls and their canopies I will not say much. You have heard from our General Secretary who erected them and at what date. They are Early Perpendicular, but with richer mouldings than is generally found in that style. Each canopy with its pinnacles has a very rich effect, and when seen in perspective make a good show; but there is very little variety—each stall is exactly like its neighbour—and there is not that overflowing imagination and invention which is seen in the finest Decorated work. It is in the misereres that the

originality is shown; they are fifty-eight in number, some fourteen being new, made when the choir was restored in 1873. A great deal of work, too, was then done in repairing the canopies, which were either very imperfect or had been repaired with poor wood, which already showed signs of decay.

As to the new carvings, one of my great difficulties has been to find from where the designs have been taken. The suggestions for some, as I shall show you, have been taken from the stalls at Worcester, but some I have not been fortunate enough to trace.

I shall not take these carvings in the order in which they are placed in the cathedral, but shall arrange them in groups, and shall take each group in turn; but before I begin I should like to discuss the question, Why is it that there are so few religious subjects represented, and folk-tales, domestic scenes, and fabulous monsters are so numerous? Personally I have never found a satisfactory explanation. First let us remember that the choir of a monastic church was for the use solely of the monks. So far as I know, it would be a most unusual thing for a layman even to come into the choir. We know that laymen were shown round the cathedral at Canterbury from Erasmus's most interesting epistle describing his visit, and that he was taken into the choir; but he specially mentions that he had letters of recommendation from the archbishop. I should suppose that here in Gloucester a layman would be shown round the ambulatory to see the shrine of the Martyr King—notice, by the way, that the screen does not come round the outer side—and the different chapels, but I should very much doubt if he would be allowed to go into the choir. The carvings there must have been for the delectation of the monks alone. Now who carved them? Did the monks themselves do any manual work in the way of building or carpentry? We have the tradition that the vaulting of the nave was done by the monks themselves, yet this is mentioned as some-

thing remarkable, the presumption being that it was quite exceptional.

There was a good deal of structural building going on at Bury St. Edmunds during the time of Jocelin de Brakelond, and yet he never refers to the brethren working at it; so, as far as I can learn, we are in complete darkness as to who were the carvers or who suggested the designs. Can we attribute the satirical scenes—which are almost absent at Gloucester—to the monks, or to the workmen who were laughing at their employers? This seems to me of the two the more likely. Personally I am not satisfied that Viollet-le-duc's often-quoted explanation of the sanction of the bishops of the buffoonery of the mock services in the cathedrals, which is—that the bishops preferred to throw their churches open to the crowd and to permit such jollities within the consecrated walls rather than run the risk of dangerous fermentation of popular ideas outside; I say, I doubt if this explanation would in any way apply to the grotesque carvings of a Benedictine abbey in England. The great French cathedrals were secular churches built by the enthusiastic laity, and were in every way different from the exclusive sanctuaries of the regulars, which so many of our English cathedrals and abbeys were.

It is very fortunate that we possess the Fabric Rolls of Exeter Cathedral, which was a church of Secular Canons. The misereres there are said to be the earliest in England, and are most excellent; some few are satirical or refer to folk-tales. In these Rolls there are noted the definite payments made to the workmen, and even occasionally the name of the workman; *e.g.* Robert Galmeton was paid £4 for making the bishop's throne *ad tascum*; again, "for carving 6 statues for the bishop's seat, 32 shillings" (date 1316-17). So I think this is sufficient evidence that the carving there, at any rate, was done by workmen who seem also to have had a free hand in their designs.

I shall now show you the slides which have been



No. 47. RECUMBENT FIGURE.



No. 4. SAMSON AND DELILAH.



**No. 15. THE THREE SHEPHERDS FOLLOWING THE
STAR WHICH ANNOUNCED THE BIRTH
OF THE SAVIOUR.**



No. 38. ELEPHANT



No. 16. A PELICAN "IN HER PIETY."



No. 80. A DRAGON.



No. 37. ST. MICHAEL. AND THE DRAGON.



No. 14. MERMAID.



No. 41. FABLE OF LION AND FOX.



No. 9. OWL IN BROAD DAY BEING PESTERED
BY LESSER BIRDS,



No. 3. KNIGHT KILLING GIANT.
(VALENTINE AND ORSON?)



No. 48. FOX CARRYING OFF GOOSE.



No. 26. ALEXANDER'S JOURNEY TO THE SKY



No. 38. HUNTSMAN.



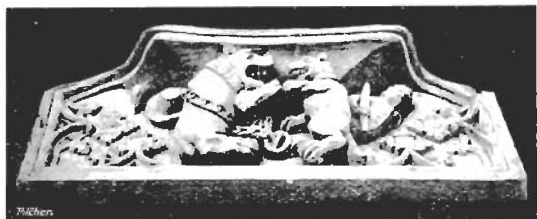
No. 27. HAWKING.



No. 84. STAG-HUNTING.



No. 12. HUNTSMAN.
(ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON?)



No. 5. BEAR-BAITING.



No. 6. |SWORD PLAY.



No. 33. PLAYING AT BALL.



No. 32. GAMBLING (?)



No. 10. LADY IN GARDEN.



No. 44. SHOOTING THE FOX.



No. 51. VINTAGE.

made for the Society from the excellent negatives taken by Mr. Dugdale. The Society is indebted more than I can say for the work he has done, both in taking the photographs and making these slides. Personally I am most grateful to him for the very liberal way in which he has kept me supplied with prints both for my own study and also for those which I was able to send away to friends who I thought might be able to help me in the interpretation of the carvings. I propose to show them in groups according to their subjects, and will begin with a series of recumbent figures.

No. 55. A very rudely-cut figure with hands together in attitude of prayer.

Nos. 42 and 53. Duplicates of a figure in a cap, which seems to have a hood attached at the back, the right hand supporting the bracket and holding a staff to help him to maintain his position; he seems to be in a loose surcoat or mantle, with a tight-fitting garment, the cotehardie or tunic, shown underneath at the neck, and pointed shoes.

No. 25. A crowned figure with long hair, the head supported by the right hand, clothed in the same way.

No. 47. A more interesting male figure, but difficult to describe; he is clothed in a tight-fitting cotehardie or tunic, buttoned, as was usual, all down the front; round the hips is buckled the military belt, which supports in front his anlace and gypciere; he wears the tight-fitting hood of the period (that of Chaucer), which has a richly-embroidered "dagged" border, and from which hangs a flat, long, narrow liripipe, the upper end of which is broken.

I propose now to go on to religious subjects, representations either of Biblical scenes or those affecting dogmas or celestial beings.

No. 39. Representing the Temptation of Adam and Eve, a modern carving, the original of which is taken from one of the stalls at Worcester, a slide of which I show. This is very interesting. In the centre is the serpent, winged, twining round the tree, with a human head. Eve on the left holds an apple in her right hand, while with the left she is

offering the apple to the devil. Adam is also eating. In the modern one at Gloucester she is offering the apple to Adam, but none of the three are eating.

Nos. 49 and 13 (new). The Sacrifice of Isaac, the old one being a modification of the corresponding stall at Worcester. The old one is much the more interesting of the two; in both Isaac is pleading for mercy—in the new one on a heap of faggots, in the old one on a well-vested altar; while in the ancient example the angel, who is appearing to the right of Abraham, appears to be holding the upper part of the sword in his left hand; in both the ram caught in the thicket is shown.

I show a very early woodcut of this subject from Mandeville's *Travels*.

No. 20 is a new carving, and is difficult to interpret. This again is modified from Worcester, which I show. I think it is a representation of Moses rebuking the Israelites. Evidently the figure on the left is Moses, as you see by the horns on his head and the tables of the law which he holds in his left hand. On the right are three figures, a man stooping forward with the palms of the hands supine as though in a deprecating manner; behind is a mother turning tenderly to her child, whom she is embracing with her right hand. In the Worcester carving Moses is represented on the right, Aaron possibly on the left, God the Father encouraging Moses in the background, while in front is the object of idolatry, which, however, is not a calf, but a bird on a pedestal.¹

No. 4. *Samson and Delilah*. Samson lies asleep at full length, enveloped in a long and loose robe; he is represented as a judge, and is of enormous size as compared to Delilah. She, with a pair of shears, is cutting off a lock of Samson's hair which is long, flowing over his shoulders; she is in flowing drapery, standing partly behind the sleeper and stooping over him. Above them are three roses.

¹ Probably intended to represent a cherub; compare Ezekiel i. 10 and x. 14.—ED.

No. 15. A very interesting and often reproduced carving. Wright, in his *History of Grottesque in Art*, describes it as follows: "Represents the three shepherds astonished at the appearance of the star which announced the birth of the Saviour of mankind." Like the three kings, the shepherds to whom this revelation was made were always in the Middle Ages represented as three in number; here the costume is remarkably well depicted, even to the details with the various implements appertaining to their profession, most of which are suspended from their girdles. They are drawn with much spirit, and even the dog is represented as an especially active partaker in the scene.

Note the hood which each wears, as well as the hat which is often drawn, as here, hanging at the neck. Each carries a crook. They wear high boots fastened with buttons, and long tunics, and carry at the girdle two or three implements, one at least of which is the tar box which was used for dressing the sheep. We have this alluded to in the *Vision* (x. 259-263). Speaking of the bishops, who are bad shepherds of their flocks, he says:—

For meny (^{waker}_{watchful}) wolves, have broke into foldes

Thyne (^{berkeres}_{dogs}) ben al blynde that bryngeth forth thy lambren.

Dispergentur oves—thy dogge dar nat berke;

The tarre is untydy, that to thyne sheep bylongeth.

Hure salve is of supersedeas in someneres boxes

(a writ to stay proceedings).

No. 1 (new). The Adoration of the Magi. A very charming carving. Not a definite copy.

No. 46. Presentation of a youth to the altar; possibly our Lord by St. Joseph and the Virgin. On the altar stands a candlestick,¹ while from above hangs a lamp. This again is adapted from Worcester.

No. 7. Coronation of the Virgin. Modern, copied from

¹ The Feast of the Purification is known as Candlemas on account of the processions with lights and hymn-singing which it was the custom to use on that day.—ED.

Chester. May I remind you how this subject was at this period becoming more and more frequently represented? As you know, the east window, one of the glories of the cathedral, represents this subject, while at the extreme end of the nave over the west window we have it again celebrated in the centre boss of the vaulting built by Abbot Morwent in 1420-37, a slide of which I show.

No. 24 (new). Two Angels playing, taken from Chester.

Leaving now these simpler carvings, I enter upon a very much more difficult subject, namely Monsters—by which I mean the union of two separate animals, as human-headed dragons, or semi-human beasts such as mermaids, and Real Animals such as pelicans, almost all of which have some deeper significance behind them; but it is not at all easy for me in my limited time to deal with this subject adequately.

The natural history of the Middle Ages had many different sources, and combined them all. Firstly, the Bible and other Hebrew literature, then the classical authors, more particularly the Natural History of Pliny (a stupendous tome full of the most remarkable collection of extraordinary stories we can imagine), then Egyptian cults and beliefs. In addition to these there was an Eastern invasion, evidence of which is found in *Æsop's Fables*, *The Golden Legend*, and *Barlaam and Josphat*, shown by stories of sphinxes, human-headed bulls, and so on. These were combined in the Alexandrian School of Philosophy and Theology, where all these fabulous animals and their stories were explained as having an allegorical meaning. Gradually an enigmatical and mystical relation between the world of men and the world of beasts was established. Origen, for instance, when speaking of the creation, explains the creatures that fill the waters, the fowls of the air, and the creeping things, as signifying good or evil thoughts and feeling, and calls attention to the great whales, as symbolising violent passions and criminal impulses.

And so arose the collection of the current opinions and ancient traditions concerning the characteristics of animals and plants known as the *Physiologus*, compiled by an

Alexandrian Greek somewhere about the fourth century. This book was translated into many languages and influenced the whole of Europe, and was the foundation of the Bestiaries, or books on animals, which are so common in mediæval literature.

I cannot do better than quote the words of Professor Evans in his book on *Animal Symbolism in Ecclesiastical Architecture* as showing the development of this subject:—

“Very early in the Christian era this traditional material infused itself into patristic literature, and thus gradually passed from rhetorical decoration in Christian homilies to artistic decoration in Christian architecture, where it found expression in fantastic and often monstrous forms, which can be understood only by tracing them to their sources in the superstitious notions of the ancient, and especially Oriental peoples. With the growth of religious scepticism and schism this symbolism gradually and imperceptibly merged into satire, so that it is often difficult to draw a line of demarcation between them. Mediæval humour was coarse rather than keen, and better skilled in wielding bludgeons than in brandishing rapiers.”

I should add to this that of course in each country these traditions would be modified and added to by the beliefs and superstitions already existing in that country. As I shall show you, we have evidence of the addition of one Norse legend at least here in our cathedral.

It will make this subject plainer if I treat some of the next few carvings more in detail, and I propose to take one representing the elephant first.

No. 35. Representing an elephant; on its back an embattled howdah, like a castle with two stories, which rests on a cloth secured by a broad belt beneath. Evidently the carver had never seen an elephant, for he has given him feet like a cart-horse, more or less a horse's head, and a large flowing tail, also like that of a horse.

A bestiary of about the same date as these carvings has been printed by the Early English Text Society (*An old*

English Miscellany, edited by Rev. Richard Morris, 1872), and let us see what is said in the account of the elephant. The first two lines please me very much—

Elpes arn in Inde riche
On bodi borlic berges-ilike (like a mountain).

There is something very delightful and elephantine in the alliteration of the second line.

Then follows an allusion to the belief that the elephant has no joints to its limbs, and therefore cannot kneel down; hence this animal was long regarded as an emblem of the kingly rank—

That he ne falle nither not
That is most in here (his) thought
For he ne haven no lith (joints)
That he mugen risen with.
How he restheth him this der (beast)
When he walketh wide,
Harken how it telleth her
 For he is all unride (immense)
A tree he seeketh to, fuligewise (truly)
That is strong, and steadfast is,
And leneth him trustlike thereby
When he is of walke weary.
The hunter hath beholden this
 That will him swiken (deceive)
Where this beastes wunne (wont) is
 To don his willen.
Saweth through tree and underprops
In the wise that he may rest
And hileth (covers) it well that he cannot tell,
Then he maketh there to char (resort)
Himselven sit alone beholding
Whether his gin will him deceive.
Then cometh this elp unride (elephant immense)
And leneth him upon his side,
Sleepeth by the tree in the shadow
And fallen both so together.
If there is no man when he falleth
 He remeth (cries out) and helpe calleth,
Remeth reuful-like on his wise (manner)
Hopeth he shall through helpe risen.

The rest of the herd tries in vain to put him on his legs—

But for the help of them all
 Ne may he comen so on stalle (upright),
 Then remen them all a rem
 So hornes blast, other belles drem (melody)
 For their mikle reming
 Running cometh a youngling
 Tathe (quickly) to him luteth (stoops)
 His snout him under putteth
 And with helpe of them all
 This elp he reisen on stalle
 And thus atbreasted (gets away) this hunters breid (deceit)
 O the wise that I have you said.

[The spelling of quotations from the bestiary has been modified.]

Then comes the *significacio*—

“Thus did Adam fall through a tree; Moses in vain tried to raise him, afterwards the prophets; a cry went up to heaven, and Christ came down to their aid; He became man, and by death went as it were under Adam and raised him out of ‘dim hell.’”

It is an odd thing that Cæsar in his *Commentaries* tells the same story of the elk.

I throw on the screen a very early woodcut of an elephant with its castle from the first printed edition of Mandeville's *Travels*, which was written at about the period in which these stalls were carved. He says—

“And that same King of Talonache hath 14,000 Olyfantes or mo which be all tame, and they be fedde of the men of his country, for his pleasure, because that he may have them redy to his handes when he hath any warre against any king or prince, and then he doth putten upon their backs castles and men of warre, as use is of these landes and lykewyse do other kings and princes thereabouts.”

I show an extremely interesting carving of an elephant from the stalls at Exeter, very early in date (1224-44), which is clearly a copy from life. The large ears, the great tusks, the upturned trunk are full of character, and the elephant is evidently an African one. Now we know that in 1254

St. Louis of France gave an elephant to Henry III., and Matthew Paris describes the flocking of people to see the mighty beast on its way to London, and we have a drawing of the elephant by Matthew Paris himself; it is possible that the carver may himself have seen this elephant.

No. 16. The Pelican "in her piety." The story of the pelican does not occur in the bestiary I have quoted from, but it is a well-known Christian symbol. The bird has at the tip of its long bill a crimson spot, and this gave rise to the belief amongst the olden naturalists that this bird, while really pluming its feathers, was feeding its young with its own blood; it is therefore the symbol of loving sacrifice. Dante speaks of our Lord as "Nostro pelicano." "The pelican, whose sons are nursed with bloude, stabbeth deep her breast, self murtheresse through fondness of her brood." So Hamlet (iv. 5)—

And like the kind, life rend'ring pelican,
Refresh them with my blood.

A variation in the pelican legend may occasionally be met with where, instead of the young being nourished by the blood of the bird, their dead bodies are restored by it to life.

"The pelicane fervently loveth her young byrdes, yet when they ben haughtie, and beginning to wax hote, they smite her in the face, and wound her, and she smiteth them and slayeth them, and after three days she mourneth for them, and then striking herself in the side till the blood run out, she sparpleth it upon their bodies and by virtue thereof they quicken again."¹

¹ The first two lines of the sixth verse of the hymn by St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1260) on the Holy Eucharist, commencing "*Adoro te, devote, latens Deitas,*" run thus—

*Pie pellicane, Jesu domine
Me immundum munda tuo sanguine.*

In Bishop Woodford's translation they are rendered—

*Fountain of goodness, Jesu, Lord and God,
Cleanse us unclean with Thy most cleansing Blood,*

because the bishop used the form given in Dr. Newman's *Hymns from the Parisian Breviary*, in which the first line is thus given—

O fons puritatis, Jesu Domine.

No. 50. The *Dragon*, a four-footed beast with the wings, head and feet of an eagle, is the commonest of all monsters, and is used most frequently as the symbol of "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil." I could occupy the whole evening with extraordinary stories of dragons who, among other peculiarities, though it is not commonly known, are great enemies to elephants. "For the elephant's blood is exceeding cold, and therefore the dragons be wonderful desirous thereof to refresh and cool themselves therewith, during the parching and hote season of the year, and to this purpose they lie under the water waiting their time to take the elephants at a vantage when they are drinking, when they catch fast hold of their trunk, and they have not so soon clasped and entangled it with their taile but they set their venomous teeth in the elephant's eare (the only part of their body which they cannot reach unto with their trunk) and so bite it hard. Now these dragons are so big withall that they be able to receive all the elephant's blood. Thus are they sucked drie, until they fall down dead, and the dragons again drunken with their blood are squised under them, and both die together." (Holland's *Pliny*, 1601, p. 199b.)

No. 34. Lion combating dragon. The same idea—the lion, the noblest of beasts, representing the principle of good combating evil. The bat-like wings of the dragon are well shown.

No. 45. The same combat. Victory uncertain.

No. 58 (new, from Worcester). Lion beginning to overcome.

No. 43. Another of same subject. The lion victorious.

No. 2. Two dragons fighting, from Boston Parish Church, Lincolnshire.

No. 23 (new, from Winchester). Two dragons with necks joining in one common jester's head with cowl and ass's ears.

There is a carving somewhat like this at Exeter.

No. 37. A winged human figure with an angel-head

and legs bare, wearing a long, loose garment gathered in at the neck and with tight sleeves, is thrusting a spear into the mouth and piercing the head of a four-footed, bat-winged dragon, the spear-head and shaft are seen coming out at the shoulder. This may perhaps represent St. Michael slaying the devil.

No. 14. A mermaid holding a large fish in each hand. Both the fishes and the piscine portion of the mermaid have loose, waving fins, which give a very graceful and undulating effect to the group. An exceedingly graceful design.

May I read to you what the bestiary says about mermaids?

In the Sea fenden (are found)
 Selcouthes (wonders) manie.
 The merman is
 A maiden ilike
 On breast and on bodi
 But all thus she is bunden (limited, bound)
 From the navel netherward (downwards)
 Nor is she no man like
 Oc (but) fish to fuliwis (to a certainty)
 Mid (with) finnes waxen
 This wonder wuneth (dwelleth)
 In wankle stede (unstable) places
 Where the water sinketh
 And scath (harm) thus worketh.
 Merry she singeth this mere (mermaid)
 And haveth many stefnes (staves, voices)
 Many and sille (shrill)
 Oc it been well ill
 Shipmen here stering forgeten
 For her stefning.
 Slumberen and slepen
 And too late waken.
 The sipes (ships) sinken with the suk (treachery)
 Ne comen he no more up
 But wise men and warre (wary)
 Again cunen chare (know how to return again)
 Ofte arn atbrosen (often are escaped),
 From her evil breast.
 Ye have heard told of this mere
 That is thus monstrous
 Half man and half fish
 Something tokneth bi this.

And the moral is: Many men are like the mermaids; they speak fair, but their deeds are evil.

It is interesting to find that Chaucer knew his natural history, for in the *Nun's Priest's Tale* he says—

And Chauntecleer so free
Soong merrier than the mermayde in the sea;
For Physiologus seith sikerly,
How that they syngen wel and myrily.—(4459-4562.)

No. 11 introduces us to some more compound beasts. Two monsters, the one on the right has fore limbs ending in human hands and hind limbs ending in three-clawed feet, with a man's face under a conical cap; the other has a female human face, hooded, and four three-clawed feet. The bodies of both terminate in long lions' tails.

No. 31. Two wingless, four-legged monsters with dogs' (?) heads, fighting, the victorious one biting the back of the head of the other, which is protruding his tongue in disgust. Both have a mane running the whole length of the body and lions' tails.

No. 36. Combat between an eagle and a four-footed beast, possibly a panther.

No. 40. A very heavy, cumbersome horse, on which rides a four-footed animal with a curling tail and semi-human face. Query a lioness, or perhaps a monkey.

We now come to a few slides illustrative of popular stories, mostly from Æsop.

No. 41. A lion approaching a fox stealthily, who is holding out his fore limbs deprecatingly. I think this is an allusion to the fable of the lion "which sometime faygned himself seke and when the beestes knew that the lyon was seke they would go alle to visite and see him, as their king, and incontinent as the beestes entryd in to his hows for to see and comforte him he devoured and ate them. But the foxes were too wary to follow their example; the lion demanded of them why they would not come within, and one of the foxes sayd to hym: 'We know well by thy traces that all the beestes which have entryd in to thy hows came

not out againe, and also if we entried within no more should we come ageyne.’”

No. 29. A rudely-carved figure of a man and donkey embracing, which I take to be an illustration of the fable of the ass and the young dog in Æsop.

If you remember, “the asse was envyous of the dogge being in such favour with his lord, for he said to himself: ‘Yf my lord and his meyne love this myschaunt beste because that he chereth and maketh feste to everybody, by greater reason they ought to love me yf I make cheer to them. Fro henceforth I shall take my disport and shall make joy and play with my lord.’” If you remember, the result was disastrous: “The lorde’s servants thenne took anone grate staves and began to smyte upon the poor asse and so corryged and bete him that after he had no luste ne courage to dañse ne make to nonne chere ne feste.”

No. 9. An owl in the centre standing on a stem of a tree, the branches of which support a pair of birds on each side; they all have their beaks open and appear to be chattering at the owl which they surround. This may be an illustration of the habit that birds have of surrounding and bullying the owl if he by chance comes out during the day; or it may be a symbolical allusion to the Jews, who in the *Physiologus* are compared to the owl, which cannot endure the presence of the sun, just as the Jews could not endure the coming of “the dayspring from on high,” loving darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

No. 17 (taken from Worcester?). May be in illustration of a story, so I have classed it here, but I have not been able to identify it. It represents a curious monster with hind legs only, large ears, a curious beaded cord (?) starting from the root of its nose and curling round its neck, with a huge mouth, down which the head of a man dressed in a loose tunic fastened by a beaded belt has disappeared—perhaps Jonah. If the figure had been that of a female it might be Saint Margaret, who in the course of her eventful life, among other unhappy experiences, was swallowed by the devil.

No. 3. A carving of the slaying of a giant by a knight. I have no clue as to what particular knight or giant this represents, though it has been said to be "Valentine and Orson." This is one of the most celebrated carvings in the cathedral, and has often been reproduced. The knight is armed with a hawberk, which is covered with a short surcoat open in front, and a comailed basinet with the ventaile or visor raised. On his left arm he holds his hollowed heart-shaped shield, and with his right hand he delivers a blow with his long straight sword at his opponent's throat. His limbs are defended by plate armour; he has shoulder roundels, and a narrow belt about his waist. He wears sollerets pointed and laminated, but without spurs; his hawberk, as it is shown through the open jupon or surcoat below the waist, has a slit or slight opening in front. Standing by a tree with his back turned towards the knight, the giant turns his head, that he may look at his antagonist, whilst he aims a blow with the club which he holds in both hands. His head and neck are covered by a hood which covers his shoulders, and has a long pendant liripipe; he wears a tunic reaching to his knees, secured by a buckled waist belt, the sleeves having close-set buttons from the elbow to the wrist, sharply pointed shoes, and a long beard. On the other side of the knight stands his charger, barbed, and with saddle and bridle, patiently waiting till the combat is over.

No. 48. The fox carrying off the goose. A very spirited carving, which of course brings to one's mind the delightful story that Chaucer put into the mouth of the nun's priest. I cannot resist the temptation of reading the very graphic account he gives of the hue and cry after the fox—

This sely widowe, and eek her doghties two
 Herden these hennes crie and maken wo
 And out at dores sterten they anon
 And syen the fox toward the grove gon
 And bar upon his back the cock away,
 And cryden Out! harrow! and wely-away

Ha! ha! the Fox! And after hym they ran
 And eek with staves many another man;
 Ran Colle oure dogge, and Talbot and Gerland
 And Malkyn with a dystaf in hir hand!
 Ran cow and calf, and eek the verrey hogges
 So were they fered for barkynge of the dogges
 And shouting of the men and women eek;
 They renne so hem thoughte hir herte break.
 They yelleiden as fiendes doon in helle;
 The dokes cryden, as men wolde hem quelle
 The gees for feere, flowen over the trees,
 Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees;
 So hydous was the noys, a benedicite!
 Certes, he Jakke Straw, and his meynce
 Ne made never shoutes half so shrille,
 When that they wolden any Flemyng kille,
 As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
 Of bras they broughten hornes and of box
 Of horn, of boon, in which they blew and powped
 And therewithal they shriked and they howped
 It seemed as that hevене should falle.—(555-581.)

No. 18. Group of figure riding a goat. This is new, being copied from the original at Worcester, a slide of which I show and describe. Female figure, nude, covered with a large net of wide meshes gathered in about the neck; she grasps the right horn of the goat with her right hand, and with her left hand holds a rabbit under the net. She is half mounted, the left leg being thrown across the goat, while she is still standing on the other; the left horn of the goat, which is branched, is broken away.

This is one of the most interesting of the series, and is a splendid instance of the method in which explanations are made. The idea has been started that it is supposed to represent the punishment of incontinence; that for that crime a woman was made to ride through the streets clad only in a net, on a goat, repeating well-known coarse rhymes that proclaim her shame.

This is a delightful piece of guess-work without a shadow of evidence that such a punishment ever existed, the real truth being that it is an illustration of a very old Norse folk-tale, of which there are several different versions. I shall

have to select one, but really this carving has points told in three several versions.

THE STORY OF QUEEN DISA.

When King Frey, or, according to other accounts, a King Sigtrud, far back in the times of heathenism, ruled in the North, the population, during a long peace, had so greatly increased that one year on the coming of winter the crops of the preceding autumn were already consumed. The king therefore summoned all the commonalty to an assembly for the purpose of finding a remedy for the impending evil, when it was decreed that all the old, the sickly, the deformed, and the idle should be slain and offered to Odin. When one of the king's councillors, named Siustin, returned from the assembly to his dwelling in Uppland, his daughter Disa inquired of him what had there taken place, and as she was in all respects wise and judicious, he recounted to her what had been resolved on. On hearing it, she said she could have given better counsel, and wondered that among so many men there was found so little wisdom. These words reached at length the ears of the king, who was angry at her boldness and conceit, and declared he would soon put her to her wit's end. He promised to take her to his counsel, but on condition that she should come to him not on foot nor on horseback, not driving nor sailing, not clad nor unclad, not in a year nor a month, not by day nor by night, not in the moon's increase nor wane. Disa, in her perplexity at this order, prayed to the goddess Frigg for counsel, and then went to the king in the following manner. She harnessed two young men to a sledge, by the side of which she caused a goat to be led; she held one leg in the sledge and placed the other on the goat, and was herself clad in a net. Thus she came to the king neither walking nor riding, nor driving, nor sailing, neither clad nor unclad. She came neither in a current year nor month, but on the third day before Yule, one of the days of the solstice, which were not reckoned as belonging to the year itself, but as a complement, and in like

manner might be said not to belong to any month. She came neither in the increase nor in the wane, but just at the full moon; neither by day nor by night, but in the twilight. The king wondered at such sagacity, ordered her to be brought before him, and found so great delight in her conversation, beauty, and understanding that he made her his queen.¹

Nos. 28 and 19 (new). A male figure riding on a goat, the right hand holding one of the horns; the other, a horn which he is either blowing or putting to his lips. Behind him hangs down a hare or rabbit. He also wears a very large hood, with a liripipe hanging from the back of the head, and which comes down in a loose manner right over the shoulders. He seems to wear a loose surcoat or tunic. The lower limbs appear to be bare; the foot is in a stirrup, and he is in the attitude of turning to look backwards.

I have not been able to identify this subject.

There follow three carvings, one new, which are very similar, and I think all refer to the same story.

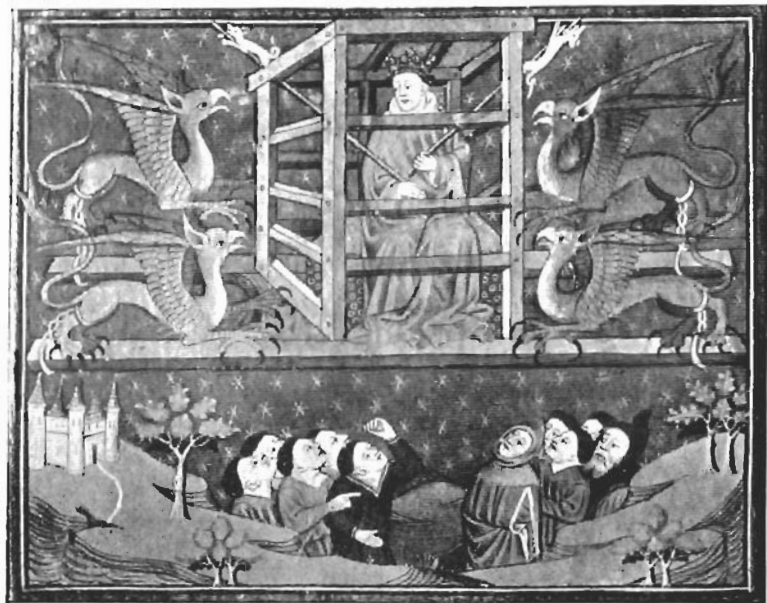
No. 8 (new). Two griffins segreant. Addressed between them as though rising from between their wings a male figure crowned, with wavy hair, holding in each hand to right and left a staff or rod, like two sceptres, a boar's head on each staff at which the griffins are pecking.

No. 26. King seated on a throne; his crown, robe, and wavy adjustment of hair resembling effigy of Edward II. *In* his right hand and *on* his left he holds upright a slender staff, carrying what appears to be the leg—from the knee to hoof—of a deer; with these deer's legs held in a horizontal position over their heads are two griffins segreant, they have collars from which chains hang which are attached to the king's throne.

No. 22. King seated on a throne, with his right hand raised and forefinger extended as though demanding attention, the other on his lap; on either side a griffin segreant with bands round their necks, but no chains, standing on the arms

¹ Thorpe, *Northern Mythology*, vol. i., pp. 209, 210.

ALEXANDER'S JOURNEY TO THE SKY.



FROM A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY MS. GIVEN BY JOHN EARL OF SHREWSBURY
TO MARGARET OF ANJOU *cir.* 1445).

Br. Mus. Roy., 15 Ed. VI. fol. 20b.

(By kind permission of the Editor of the "Burlington Magazine.")

of the chair in which the king is seated, with their beaks near the king's ears, as though whispering to him.

These three (?) carvings represent "*Alexander's Journey to the Sky.*"

The legendary history of Alexander is derived from a work written in Greek at Alexandria about A.D. 200, called *Pseudo-Callisthenes*. This was translated into Latin by the Archpriest Leo at Naples in the tenth century, when the particular incident here illustrated was added.

There are numerous manuscripts and printed editions in many languages, the history being evidently very popular.

The story runs that Alexander, arriving at the end of the world, pondered whether this were indeed the end of the world and the place where the sky slopes down to it. "I wished," he says, "therefore, to search out the truth, so I ordered two of the birds of that place to be caught. . . . So when two of them were secured I gave orders that no food be given them for three days. And on the third day I ordered a piece of wood to be constructed, in shape like a yoke, and a basket to be fastened in the midst thereof, with two spears set up therein, seven cubits in length, having horse's liver at the top. Immediately the birds flew up to devour the liver, and I went up with them in the air so far that I thought I was near the sky. And I shivered all over by reason of the exceeding coldness of the air that arose from the birds' wings."

He meets a winged creature with a human face, which warns him to desist, lest he be devoured by his own birds; so he turns the spears downwards, and the birds descend. He beholds as it were a great serpent (the sea), and a small round threshing-floor (the earth) in the midst thereof, and alights eventually ten days' journey from the place where he had left his army.

NOTE.—In the *Burlington Magazine* of February, 1905, there is an article by Mr. Campbell Hodgson on this journey, illustrated by early miniatures from French MSS., and also a reproduction of a unique woodcut by Schäufolein in the

British Museum (*circa* 1516-37). I am indebted to Mr. Campbell Hodgson and the Proprietors of the *Burlington Magazine* for permission to reproduce one of the early miniatures.

We now come to hunting scenes.

Nos. 27 and 21 (new). Rider on a mule wearing spotted tunic and hood, which comes over his shoulder with long liripipe extending straight behind him; sleeves tight with elbow lappets flying out behind. He has a cap on his head (?), tight leggings, and pointed shoes with rouelle spurs. He holds the reins in his left hand and a long whip in the right. The saddle, saddle cloth, stirrups, stirrup leathers, bridle and reins, with the enriched bit, are clearly expressed. In front of the rider is a hawk in the act of striking a large duck on the wing. Attendant on foot behind the rider in tight jerkin reaching to mid-leg, hood with liripipe and shoes, and beating a tabor.

No. 38. Horseman riding at full speed. He wears a large mantle flowing behind him, a loose tunic, tight leggings, pointed shoes and rouelle spurs; his sword or anelate is broken. He wears a cap, rather like a cap of maintenance, turned up over his face, fastened under the chin, and crowned with a low feather (?). He holds his reins with his left hand; with his right he raises to his mouth a large hunting horn. The horse has an ornamental bit and bridle and single rein; a saddle girth is shown, and the straps pass over the chest and under the tail. A dog is running under the horse.

No. 54. Deer stalker, shooting with a long bow at a stag, again giving the expression of rapid movement. He wears a loose tunic and hood. The short sleeves of the tunic show the tight sleeves, close buttoned below, of his under jerkin. On his right side attached to his belt is a sheaf of "cloth yard" arrows. The shoes are sharply pointed. Extending behind him is his long rapier-like weapon, or it may be his sharp-pointed staff.

There are two slides representing chivalry.

No. 12. Knight riding full speed, bending forward on

his charger's neck. His helmet is cylindrical and closed, his shield is advanced before his face, his long surcoat is flowing behind him; he wears rouelle spurs and holds a drawn sword in his right hand. The horse is fully barbed, and its face is protected by a "face crest."

Notice close to the horse's head a winged and horned imp. This may possibly be a representation of St. George and the dragon.

No. 52 (copied from Worcester). The Tournament. Single combat of knights. Two knights mounted, clad in complete plate-armour and joupons, which are elaborately jagged and embroidered. They wear rouelle spurs and helmets with the visors down, and the faces are well carved. Each has a shield with the notch in the upper side, on which the spear rested. The knight on the left is getting much the worst of it; his horse is pushed back on its haunches, and the knight is evidently in a sore strait—so his squire thinks, who is equally lamentably overthrown. He has two tabors or drums, which he has been playing. The attendant of the victorious knight is complacently blowing a trumpet of peculiar shape. The horses' harness is most richly embroidered, but they wear no plate-armour.

Sports and Pastimes.

No. 5. Bull-baiting. On the left a bear sitting up, with collar and chain; on the right a dog, also sitting up, with a collar alone. On the extreme right there is the terror-stricken keeper; he seems to have a cap on his head and no hood, and his body is clothed by a jerkin closely buttoned in front; in his right hand he holds a stick. On the other side of the bear lie two hats.

No. 57. Wrestlers. Two men, nude except kilts, are wrestling together, each one grasping the other by a short scarf passing round his antagonist's throat.

No. 6. Tree in the centre, and on each side a man in the act of rushing towards another on the other side. Both have hoods, tunics (mantles?), button sleeves, and sharply-

pointed shoes. The man to left with long beard, his anelace or dagger hanging from his belt, his left hand stretched behind him, while with right hand crossing the stem of the tree he grasps the left hand of the other man. This other man with short-trimmed beard, his right hand outstretched behind him, with his left hand makes a thrust at the other with his long anelace; part of the right arm is broken away.

No. 33. Two youths playing with a large ball, wearing tight leggings and pointed shoes; both have jupons reaching to the knee, jagged at the bottom, and buttoned with close-set buttons down the front; their buckled belts sustain their gypcyeres (wallets); they wear their hoods, jagged or scalloped (and doted) at the borders, and have very long and sharp liripipes hanging down behind.

No. 32. Two youths, in same costume as the last, facing each other, playing with five balls or disks; in the background a rose tree with flowers and buds.

No. 10. A lady in a garden. On each side is a tree with branches, &c.; two birds sitting in the tree to the right and one to the left. The lady stands in the centre holding a branch with her left hand and some small object in her right, too small I fear to be a book. At her feet a dog is looking up at her. She wears a long robe with wide hanging sleeves; on her head and falling over her shoulders a large hood, which is gathered up and fastened in front and thrown back on either side.

No. 56. Subject unknown. To the left somewhat of the centre the stem of a tree with branches, &c. On either side a boy (much mutilated). On the right is a woman advancing towards them with outstretched arms, carrying a small object in her right hand. She does not seem to wear a hood, but a kind of round cap on her head, and her robe fits much more loosely to her figure than in the last carving. On the extreme right and left in low relief lies a donkey.

No. 44. In the centre is a tree; on either side of the stem a dog on his hind legs, with his fore paws on the stem,

barking (?) (the head is gone) at a fox among the branches. On the left a hunter kneeling on his right knee, wearing a tunic, belt and hood, shooting with his long bow at the fox.

Then lastly follow two scenes of husbandry.

No. 30. Swine feeding in the back in a forest; in the centre the stem of an oak tree with branches, amongst which are a squirrel and a bird. Under the tree a boar and sow are eating fallen acorns. On the extreme right is a dog.

No. 51. Vintage. In the centre a vine with leaves and bunches of grapes. On either side stands a countryman; that to the left is placing a bunch of grapes in a basket, which is held by his fellow, with his right hand, while with his left hand, which holds a knife, he is cutting off a bunch. His fellow on the right is holding the basket to receive the grapes with both hands. They are clothed in the same way exactly as the other similar figures, except that the one on the right seems to have no belt; the other has tucked up the skirt of his jupon into his belt.
